

Columbia MD Family History Center Temple and Family History Consultant In-service Training Letter, Aug 2017

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What Microfilms are at our FHC

There are no more short-term microfilms at the Family History Center. The Columbia MD FHC wiki page has been changed to explain this change. Another change is that the large spreadsheet that contains our long-term holdings of microfilms and microfiche has been updated to capture the recently ordered films in the Magento system (nearly 3,500 items). Once the Magento record is finalized, we will also add the four films purchased from another source and donated to our FHC. They are now housed in the same drawer with the BGL 101-111 films.

Research vs Search

With the advent of so many records being indexed and easily available to genealogical researchers, it is easy to get used to the ease of searching for records in FamilySearch, the partner programs (such as Ancestry.com), and “google” searches. When needed, “**research**” makes a deeper dive into what records may be available.

For example, Ancestry only displays results from 10% of its holdings to manage the user experience. With about 20 Billion indexed records, exposing the typical subscriber to all results of a full query would be overwhelming. To get to the other 90%, the **researcher** needs to

examine their “Card Catalog” to see what databases they have that may apply to a given research project. Similarly, FamilySearch also allows for researching in their catalog for sources for a given location, for example. By examining which databases each of the sites own, the patron can determine if either site has the data being sought. Research extends to Cyndislist.com, a “card catalog” of the genealogy related websites on the internet (over 333,000 sites). Research also extends to the physical records held in the library consortium called WorldCat.org. This site takes advantage of the digitization of the card catalogs of the participating libraries, combining them so that a researcher can ask what is the closest library that has a copy of the book he or she wants. Consultants should “play with” these tools to be able to help patrons use them.

Home programs to try out at the FHC

Staff member occasionally get asked for a recommendation for a genealogy program to buy for home use. Rather than give a specific answer (at least at first), staff members are encouraged to point out that at the Family History Center, we have three programs for home computers that patrons can try for themselves: (in alphabetical order) Ancestral Quest, Legacy and Roots Magic. For convenience, all three are installed on all ten of the FHC computers. To launch them, simply press the windows key (between the left Ctrl and Alt keys) or click on the Windows start button (lower, left corner), and then click on “All Programs” (near the bottom on in the left column) and find the program alphabetically. Note that the companies put out new editions faster than we can keep up with, so our version may be a little out of date.

Why attach all census records to the members of the family

Occasionally LDS patrons ask why go to the bother to find more census records for a person or family, especially when the temple work is complete. This is a collection of some thoughts about why.

BECAUSE...

1. The LDS “Standard of Excellence” is “worthy of all acceptance” (meaning to me: no gaps, no errors).
2. The GPS (Genealogical Proof Standard) includes the notion of a reasonably exhaustive search (i.e. looking for records “in all the right places.”)
3. The census records give views of the family, decade by decade, perhaps the best outline of who needs to be included in the family group. So there may be additional children listed in other census records.
4. A young child present in one census but not in the next prompts the question, “Did he/she die?”
5. When an older child is not present in the next census, the question arises, “Did he/she get married, to go college, or go into the service or leave for some other reason?”

6. The variation of the way the names are presented may give a more complete indication of a person's full name (in the absence of a birth record).
7. There is a potential of identifying an additional spouse, or elderly parent.
8. The ages listed in the various census may vary. In the absence of a birth record, by using the Census enumeration date you may be able to estimate the month of birth.
9. In some census years the date of immigration is listed.
10. In some census years the profession is listed.
11. You may discover the need to merge families. For example, the 1860 census was used by one researcher to add a family and the 1880 census was used by a different researcher to add the same family. FamilySearch query results now flag which records have been attached, and by clicking on the icon, you may see to whom the record is attached.

End of the Microfilm Era

With only two more weeks available for patrons to order microfilms, some questions still arise. Information for you to pass along: The Columbia, MD Family History Center plans to retain all our films and the film readers at least until all the microfilm and microfiche holdings of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City are digitized, now scheduled for the end of 2020. At some point we will have to make another determination based on our then current needs. It is mainly our non-member patrons who have ordered microfilms who need this reassurance.

In the meantime, there will be an increasingly smaller portion of the church's genealogy microfilms that will not be available either at the Family History Center nor online, until all the records have been digitized and are all online. At that point, There will still be some records that will be available online only at Family History Centers (for policy reasons, in keeping with the agreements made with the record owners when the records were originally filmed). Other than that small portion, the rest of our holdings will be available online. It will take some time for the indexing effort to catch up with the digitization process, so until all records are indexed, some will be available to view only frame by frame, similar to the current experience with microfilms.